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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

THE HONORABLE GEORGE F. HOAR

BEFORE THE

General Court of Massachusetts,

Feb. 12, 1901.

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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND INVITED GUESTS

ON FEBRUARY 12, 1901

BY THE

HON. GEORGE FRISBIE HOAR

IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION OF THE

GENERAL COURT

BOSTON

1901

BOSTON:
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ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT, MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN : —

Your invitation comes to me alike as a high honor and a command not to be disobeyed. I seem, as I speak to this assembly, to be speaking to the Commonwealth herself, here in her stately palace, in gracious bodily presence. To a son of Massachusetts there can be no earthly honor greater than that she can confer, and no mandate save that of the country alone which can speak with so great authority. It may seem, at the first thought, to have something of disrespect in it, what, after all, is the highest token of respect, that I have not for a moment stopped to consider whether what I have to say shall please or displease. The faithful servant does his master most honor when he gives fearless even if unwelcome counsel. The gracious master honors that servant above all others to whose good will and affection he permits the freest and the plainest speech.

This day has a double significance. It is the birthday of our great martyr-President. It is near the beginning of your first session in the new century. This house, I suppose, is the oldest legislative body on earth representing a free people, save only the House of Commons and perhaps the Virginia House of Burgesses. Whether we are to dwell wholly on the life and teachings of Abraham Lincoln, and to see how near we have followed or how far we have drifted away from the path he marked out

for us, or whether we are to take the census of what has been gained for humanity in one of the periods by which history is reckoned, our thoughts are not unlikely to turn into the same channels. Freedom, self-government, justice, the welfare of humanity, were the great things for which Lincoln lived and for which Lincoln died. Freedom, self-government, justice, the welfare of humanity are still the tests by which we mark the progress of the nation and the race.

I have sometimes thought that we might improve somewhat our method of celebrating the birthdays of our heroes and statesmen who have departed. Instead of inviting some living orator, let us, as near as may be, invite the man himself to the celebration. If the people are considering some question involving the public welfare or the fate of the republic, or what, if not the same thing, are higher and dearer yet, the honor and the conscience of the republic, let some faithful searcher gather everything the man we would honor has left us on that subject in the way of example or of precept. If the question be whether we shall enter on a career of foreign dominion, let us celebrate Washington's birthday by recalling what he said on that subject. If the question be what constitutes lawful reason for war; or what is the duty of good citizenship when the country is in a war in which it is wrong; or what are the rights which belong everywhere to that being which we call a people; or what is the line of distinction between power and right, when a strong nation has to deal with a weak one; or whether it be lawful for one people to subdue another to its will; what consent of the governed, if any, be

necessary to the exercise of just powers of government ; whether there can be taxation rightfully without representation ; whether men may be held lawfully in a State as subjects and not citizens, — would it not be well, on Abraham Lincoln's birthday, to gather everything he said on those subjects, and what he did when charged with public responsibilities? Would it not be well, on Webster's birthday, to call him up to bear his testimony as in visible presence ; or, on Jefferson's birthday, to hear what he had to say about it ; or, on Sumner's birthday, to listen again to the counsel of that dauntless and righteous spirit? In that way the silent lips of the mighty dead will seem ever speaking their high commands to their countrymen. In that way every generation will still live, and Webster and Sumner and Sam Adams and John Adams may still always be present on this spot with which they were so familiar in life, still sitting, still deliberating, still debating.

But I have preferred, if I may so far presume on your generous indulgence, to devote this hour to a few thoughts appropriate to the beginning of the new century.

I will not, in the time I have a right to occupy to-day, undertake to deal with matters which are sure to be thoroughly discussed elsewhere. I have not time, and it would not be worth while, if I had, to compare the condition of the country or of the Commonwealth in power, in population, in wealth, in invention and in material resources, or in general intelligence, with that of 1701 or 1801. You will find all that in the census and the statistical tables of boards of trade and chambers of commerce. If you wish, in these days, to stir

the blood and to start the tear of pride in an American citizen, the best thing with which to do it is a column of figures from the census. I wish to speak only of some of the things which affect the moral condition and character of the people. I like better to consider what we have gained in the two centuries, and especially in the one century which has just gone by, in the things which make the true welfare and determine the destiny of the Commonwealth. It must be but a glance. I can speak only of a few things out of many. Civil and religious freedom; the comfort and dignity of the common life of the people; fair distribution of wealth; opportunity to get the necessities and comforts of life and to achieve success in honorable employment; purity of legislation; the power of conscience and justice over the action of the people; security of life and property against crime; the prevalence of public spirit over party spirit; the dignity of manhood and womanhood, not only as respected in ourselves, but as respected and guarded in our treatment of other races than our own, — these are the chief things, or certainly among the chief things, which are to decide whether Massachusetts shall abide and keep her honorable place in the estimation of mankind. I wish to say a few words only about each of these things, hastily, and without much attempt at order.

The keynote of the constitutional history of Massachusetts, from the landing of the Puritans to this hour, has been a people's government by its sober second thought. Her people have always insisted that the thoughts of a great nation ought to come slowly and its action ought to

be deliberate. So, while spasms of popular feeling have swept over the State, it is gratifying to record that they have borne little fruit of mischief. It is noticeable that almost every one of these cases has been an instance where the people have, for the time being, broken away from party ties, and that they have been brought back to sobriety and wisdom by party instrumentality. To every people into whose government anything of freedom enters, government by party is a necessity. In proportion as governments are free, the necessity of party government becomes greater. In proportion as party government has prevailed in any nation or in any generation, in that proportion the nation or generation has achieved most for righteousness, justice and liberty, has made most rapid progress and has been most prosperously and wisely administered. Responsible party government is a highly conservative force in a republic. It demands leadership. But it demands also consultation, deliberation and following leadership. So the diminution of the strength of party obligation is by no means an unmixed good.

But the sense of party obligation which puts party spirit above public spirit and gives bitterness not only to the discussion of public affairs but to private and social intercourse, which assails personal motive and would destroy personal character, is doubtless one of the greatest of public evils. I rejoice to believe that within the last century it has largely diminished and seems almost wholly disappearing from Massachusetts. This has perhaps brought with it some loss of steadfastness and constancy. But, on the whole, it is a

great gain. No man who can read the literature or history of the time before the revolution, of the time just after the revolution, or knows the past or present condition of other free countries, will doubt, I think, that the spirit of what is called partisanship, in the bad meaning of the word, is less in this Commonwealth than in any other spot on the earth's surface, and is less in this Commonwealth to-day than it was ever before. If you would search for political bitterness, for hatred, malice and uncharitableness, for attributing to men base motives wherever base motives are possible or even conceivable, you may perhaps find them still. But you will not find them in the organs of either of the great parties of Massachusetts, or in the representatives of those great parties who sit in these seats side by side, striving with a generous emulation to do what is for the good of the Commonwealth they love.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, if there did not exist what may be called party spirit, it was because the rigid intolerance of the time did not admit of party itself. There had been a few great controversies in the seventy years since the settlement; but they had been solely, I suppose, of a religious character. Party, in its new and modern sense, came into being with the great controversy with the crown, which ended in revolution and independence.

In 1801 Mr. Jefferson was elected to the presidency after a long and bitter contest in the House. The Federalists favored Aaron Burr. It seemed not so much a party victory as a new revolution. Levi Lincoln the younger, in an oration warmly praised by Jefferson him-

self, proposed that thereafter the 4th of March should take the place of the 4th of July to be celebrated as the birthday of American freedom. The Republicans and Democrats who sit side by side in these seats in an affectionate brotherhood can hardly believe the bitterness of the party spirit of the time. It pervaded the pulpit, the press and the college. It divided the social life of village communities into hostile camps. The elder Levi Lincoln, who had organized and led the great political revolution in New England, then Mr. Jefferson's Attorney-General, tells him in the spring of 1801 that things are getting a little better, and that even the ministers pray with more discretion. The clergymen were Federalists, almost all of them. The Democrat seemed in their eyes a sinner almost past praying for, except that sometimes the invocation would go up from the desk, "Oh, Lord, wilt Thou send down Thy blessing upon the President of these United States, and wilt Thou give him that wisdom which he so much needs."

The college shared and reflected the same feeling. At Dartmouth, in 1803, the poet of the Phi Beta Kappa Society denounced the new administration with the ferocity and with some little trace of the vigor of Juvenal. He represents the awful shade of Washington, then dead but four years, rising from his tomb on the banks of the Potomac, and casting angrily in the faces of his unworthy and degraded countrymen the honors with which they had once crowned him : —

His warm cheek glowed, and flashed his angry eye ;
Then from his brow the laurel wreath unbound,
And threw the withering honors on the ground.

Here is the portraiture of Thomas Jefferson, then President : —

Cimmerian goblins brooded o'er the hour
 When here a wild projector rose to power ;
 Delusive schemes distend whose plodding brain,
 Whose philosophic robe debaucheries stain.
 He, weak in rule, unskilled in moral lore,
 In practice infidel, in spirit poor ;
 Despised in person and debased in mind,
 At once the curse and pity of mankind ;
 Pleased with his simple garb and atheist lore,
 Reviles the God his countrymen adore.
 Refined in insult, there we see him shed
 Theatric sorrow o'er the mighty dead.
 Oh, then, then Heaven's indignant thunders slept ;
 The shade was wounded and the virtues wept.

Here is the poet's picture of Albert Gallatin, that most accomplished scholar and patriot, then Secretary of the Treasury : —

Columbians, see disgraced and drooping stand
 Your eagle, half unfledged, by party's hand.
 Columbians, see a foreign child of vice,
 Vile leech of state, whose virtue's avarice,
 Sedition-nursed and taught in faction's school,
 With front of triple brass your treasury rule.
 Columbians, see the foes of virtue rise,
 By slander mounted and upheld by lies.
 Columbians, see your veterans basely spurned,
 Your heroes slighted and your chiefs unmourned.
 See, nor, while merit from your pride is driven,
 Expect the favor of offended Heaven.

This poem was published by a committee of which Ezekiel Webster, the brother of Daniel, himself afterward one of the most celebrated men in New Hampshire, was

chairman. Through the committee, the Society of the Phi Beta Kappa returned to the author their cordial thanks for his "ingenious and sentimental poem, and request a copy for publication."

This was Dartmouth. I am afraid Harvard was worse. Fisher Ames, our great orator, who ought still to be studied by our youth as a model, who was offered the presidency of Harvard just about the time the letter was written, says: "Our country is too big for union, too sordid for patriotism, too democratic for liberty. What is to become of it, he who made it best knows. Its vice will govern it by practising upon its folly. This is ordained for democracies. . . . Botany Bay will be a bettering-house for our public men. Our morals, forever sunning, and fly-blown like fresh meat hung up in the election market, will taint the air like pestilence. Liberty will choke in such an atmosphere, fouler than the vapor of death in a mine."

There were towns — I think it was a little worse in New Hampshire than in Massachusetts — where the whole Democratic party would combine to prevent a Federalist moving into town, and the whole Federal party would combine to keep out a Democrat, or to get him out if he came in. In choosing a doctor or a lawyer, or in dealing with a storekeeper, the Federalist patronized the Federalist and the Democrat the Democrat.

I think we have much improved in these matters. I do not wish to discourage the efforts of some of my Independent friends. They will doubtless improve by practice, if they continue of the same way of thinking long enough. But as yet their descriptions of President

McKinley are far behind in ability and somewhat behind in bitterness the Democratic descriptions of Washington, or the Federalist descriptions of Jefferson.

Our ancestors two centuries ago encountered and sometimes yielded to the temptations which belonged to a time which had not yet thrown off the superstitions of the dark ages. They had been themselves the victims of religious intolerance and political oppression; and men who have been the victims of political and religious oppression are apt, when they get the power, to exercise such oppression in their turn. We have gained much in the matter of religious freedom since the time of the witchcraft persecution, little more than two centuries ago. We have gained much during the century just closed. Within my recollection, Abner Kneeland was put on his trial in Boston for blasphemy for a temperate argument against the prevalent Christian faith. The ruins of the Ursuline Convent were still standing on yonder hill in Charlestown when I was a student at Harvard. Down, I think, to 1850 or thereabouts, the Legislature refused a charter to the Catholic College of the Holy Cross at Worcester. This charter was not actually granted until 1865. I yield to no man in reverence for the mighty Puritan who builded this State and laid deep below the frost its solid foundations in religion and liberty. I reverence also the great generation that followed the war of the revolution, and sent your predecessors to this spot to gain for Massachusetts the title of the "model Commonwealth." Their blood runs in my veins. I am their offspring in every line of descent. Whatever the State has been, has become or shall be, is largely their work. But I believe

that the spirit of religious freedom is purer in our time than it was in theirs. I am not quite ready to maintain that the Mathers were better religious teachers than Edward Everett Hale or Phillips Brooks, — aye, or than Thomas Conaty.

Perhaps the most distinctive single characteristic of our time is the great, rapid and easy accumulation of wealth in individual hands. It is in some respects a public benefit; it is in some respects a public danger. In general, these vast estates go, in one or two generations at the farthest, back into the general mass of property, or are set apart for public purposes. As a rule, the rich men of this country have been stirred by a generous ambition to use a large part of their wealth for public objects. The voluntary gifts for education alone large enough to be separately noted in the press for the last quarter of a century amount to nearly \$300,000,000, besides gifts to libraries. If they leave no children, it all goes that way. If they leave children, our laws, which forbid tying up property by will or deed for a longer period than a life in being at the death of the testator or grantor and twenty-one years thereafter, insure the rapid division of the great fortune; and the heirs in many cases have a genius for scattering property equal to that of the genius that acquired it. So the people who get, in the way of employment, the benefit of the energy that builds up great business enterprises, get, sooner or later, also the fortune acquired by the man who originated them.

But I agree that the effect of these vast fortunes is bad in the substitution of luxury and extravagance in place of the plain living that characterized our frugal

republican fathers. A greater danger still, which I think we shall find means to deal with, is the corrupt use of money to carry elections or to get high office or influence Legislatures. Of this we have had some most disgraceful recent examples. These things cannot always be proved clearly enough to defeat their object, even if the men who have done them not only do not deny them but boast of them. One remedy must be found in an aroused and indignant public opinion. The millionaire who would corrupt a great State to get a great office must be made to feel that his success will bring with it neither joy nor honor. Let public contempt and scorn blast him. Let him be avoided as one with a leprosy. We shall not, probably, revive the ignominious punishments of the past, but, if they are ever revived, let him be their first victim. The whipping-post, the branding on the forehead, the cropping of the ears, the scourging at the cart's tail, are light punishments for the rich man who would debauch a State, whether it be an old State with an honorable history, or a young and pure State in the beginning of its history. If we cannot apply them literally and physically, let the aroused public sentiment of his countrymen pillory and brand and scourge the infamous offender. Leave him to his infamy. Let him be an outcast from the companionship of freemen.

Give him a cloak to hide him in,
And leave him alone with his shame and sin.

We will not be cast down. This thing is partial, local, temporary. The great mass of the American people is honest, patriotic and incorruptible. Every generation

has had its own faults and temptations and wrong-doings ; every generation will have its own faults and temptations and wrong-doings unto the end of time. We have to encounter an evil which comes from a great wealth and a great prosperity. England went through the same trial long ago. I am not speaking of the time of Sir Robert Walpole, the great prime minister, who said that every man had his price, but of a later time. Disraeli said in the House of Commons that long after the time of Walpole, after the close of the American war, a member of the government used to stand at the entrance of the House of Commons at the end of the session and give every member who had faithfully supported the government a five-hundred-pound note. England has put an end to corruption and bribery. We can do everything that England can, and we can do a great many things that England cannot.

It has been well said by Mr. Webster, who knew the New England character and comprehended New England institutions more profoundly than any other man who ever lived, that "there is hardly a greater blessing conferred on man than his natural wants." If he had wanted no more than the beasts, who can say how much more than they he would have attained? In considering the comfort and dignity of common life by which the social conditions of a State are determined, it is no cause of regret, but of congratulation and thankfulness rather, that our wants to-day far transcend those of our simple and frugal ancestors. Plain living and high thinking are doubtless the best conditions for human life, but, if the living be too plain, the thinking will not be high. The

soul and the body will not often hunger or thirst at the same time. Mean and base surroundings, without the refinement of taste, are apt to degrade alike the intellectual and the moral nature. So I count the improved style of living, the widening of the circle of what are called the necessities of life, the adornment of the mechanic's home and the improvement in the farmer's dwelling, which have taken place in both these two centuries we are reviewing, as an unmixed blessing. It has not only stimulated manufacture, it has not only been the parent of inventive genius, it has not only increased national wealth, but it has elevated national character.

Was there ever such an example on earth as Massachusetts of the peaceful incorporation into a State of men of foreign origin and alien blood, — a people considerably larger in number than those of the original stock? Yet the essential qualities of character remain unchanged, or only changed for the better. Massachusetts has been the author of great benefactions to mankind. Her example has gone, as her children have gone, from one end of this continent to the other. Foreign nations have profited by her lessons. English freedom, as it has slowly broadened down from precedent to precedent, has owed much of its growth to precedents set to England by America and set to America by Massachusetts. But among her greatest benefactions has been her benefaction to the strangers she has welcomed within her gates and seated as brethren, or rather as children, at her hospitable board. And yet, whatever benefit she has conferred upon them, — upon the Swede, upon the Irishman, upon the Englishman,

upon the Italian, — they have repaid over and over again to her.

Let us not discourage the healthy discontent of labor, still less the impatience of poverty with its lot. It is from these that great improvements in social conditions are born. This discontent, when it flows in healthy channels, begets invention, begets energy, begets improvement in legislation, and keeps the State from stagnation and corruption. But, still, the plain man who lives in his simple dwelling, who looks with envy upon the luxury in which his neighbor dwells, may well reflect what wealth belongs to him by virtue of his citizenship, which no prince or nobleman or nabob ever enjoyed in former generations. He is the joint owner of beautiful parks and galleries and libraries. Schools and colleges are open to his children at a cost almost nominal. He is transported from town to town, over country roads, through fertile fields, through populous towns and cities. He can enjoy the mountains of beautiful Berkshire, which no Arcadia ever rivalled, or the glorious sea coast scenes of Essex, where the eternal sea beats on the eternal rocks, in chariots drawn by swift and invisible coursers, which the wealth of no Astor or Lawrence could have bought a generation ago. His are the transcendent sweets of domestic life in the security and the glory of our Massachusetts citizenship, and above all, the right, as his eyes gaze on the American flag, to say, "That is the emblem of my country and the symbol of my power."

If Providence afflict him or his household with insanity or blindness or deafness or idiocy, what a contrast has this

single century witnessed in the dealing of the State with these unfortunate beings. Within living memory the insane man was chained in some wretched out-house, like a wild beast, or, if less dangerous, walked the streets, the mockery of brutal and senseless sport. The ray of intellectual light seldom penetrated the darkened mind of the child who was born blind or deaf. To-day the deaf and dumb learn articulate speech, and often mingle with their fellow beings without their infirmity being detected. A deaf, dumb and blind girl has just won high honors at Radcliffe. The insane is clothed and his humanity respected, even if not in his right mind, and the gentle ministrations of Christian charity awaken the darkened soul of the idiot. The State performs these Christian offices for the poorest as for the wealthiest of her children.

A hundred years ago slavery had been abolished in Massachusetts but twenty years. The slave trade, which had disgraced Boston in the middle of the century before, still lingered in the New England seaports. In 1820 Mr. Webster exclaimed at Plymouth: "It is not fit that the land of the Pilgrims should bear the shame longer. I hear the sound of the hammer, I see the smoke of the furnaces where manacles and fetters are still forged for human limbs. I see the visages of those who by stealth and at midnight labor in this work of hell, foul and dark, as may become the artificers of such instruments of misery and torture. Let that spot be purified, or let it cease to be of New England; let it be purified, or let it be set aside from the Christian world; let it be put out of the circle of human sympathies and human regards, and let civilized man henceforth have no communion with it."

There are doubtless some dark colors in our picture. We cannot look without deepest concern upon the terrible increase of crime, — an increase which seems to be more rapid as the years go by. We attributed this until lately to the coming into our community of men of foreign birth, who had not been educated like us or bred to the self-restraint of freedom, and to the growth of great cities. But we can avail ourselves of no such refuge now. In 1820 Mr. Webster at Plymouth dwelt with pride upon the fact that all New England slept at night in safety with unlocked doors. Fifty years ago it was a maxim accepted everywhere that the crime of murder was impossible of concealment; that, if other means failed, the murderer himself could not bear the weight of his guilty secret; that, as the same great authority said, “There is no escape from confession but suicide, and suicide is confession.” But to-day crimes against human life and against female chastity are committed with impunity by men of the purest Puritan blood in rural communities, and they go undetected and unpunished. When a murder was committed in Dedham, near a hundred years ago, the great orator and statesman, Fisher Ames, said, “Let no man sleep in Dedham this night.” If a murder should be committed, I will not say in Dedham, but in Worcester, to-morrow, the neighbors on the next street would scarcely hear or scarcely heed the news. The spirit of gambling which prevails everywhere, not only among the practised gamblers on the stock exchange, but through brokers is carried on by widows with their little fortunes, tempts the trustee and the treasurer and the bank officer with his humble salary, so that embezzlement, in many

cases followed by no disgrace or public censure, is growing and increasing fearfully throughout Massachusetts.

There is a great unsolved problem which still lowers over us like a dark cloud. It has till lately been a domestic question only. But it is now threatening us with new dangers in the far East. We have, on the whole, met with admirable success in dealing with men of the white race of foreign birth and of other religious faith than that of the Puritans. Fifty-two per cent. of the people of Massachusetts are of foreign birth, or the children of men of foreign birth. They have had and have, as the rest of us have had, their grave faults. But they have borne a noble and useful part in the history of Massachusetts in peace and war. They have advanced since they came here in every quality of good citizenship and with marvellous rapidity. They have been among our best and bravest soldiers, they have built our railroads, their men have taken their share in our public affairs, and their women have been and are valued and useful inmates of our households. They have set us an example of patriotism and of conjugal affection.

But we can tell no such story of our dealing with the Indian or the Negro or the Oriental. Undoubtedly much has been gained. The Negro has come out of slavery. So far as constitutional enactments go, he has all the rights of citizenship. In Massachusetts, I am proud to say, he takes his place as an equal and sometimes as a superior in our universities and colleges and public schools. But still, if you look the country over, the condition of the American Negro is a shame to the American white man. Most of the Indian wars of the last century, bloody

and cruel as they have been, have been the fault of the whites. We are at this moment dealing with the people of an alien race in the far East as we would never for a moment, under precisely the same conditions, deal with men of Anglo-Saxon blood. If reconstruction has been in any degree a failure, if our Indian administration has been brutal or corrupt, if thousands upon thousands of human lives have been needlessly sacrificed in the Philippine Islands, the fault has been almost wholly with the American white man.

I believe the solution of this difficulty is to be found in the Golden Rule and in the great Declaration, which is but the application of the Golden Rule to the conduct of States. If the white man will take these for his guides when he deals with the Negro and the Indian, if America will take these for her rule of action in dealing with weak foreign nations, the difficulties that beset us will disappear. If we do not, as sure as God liveth, however the weaker races may suffer, the penalty will fall upon us. I have an abiding confidence that these clouds which hover over us will disappear. I am no prophet, nor son of a prophet, except as all our fathers were prophets. But I think I know the temper of the American people, and I know that I know the temper of the people of Massachusetts. I have an abiding and absolute conviction that, with knowledge of the truth and the letting in the light, persistence in a wrong to any people or race is wholly impossible to our just and generous countrymen. The light will come to us, if we will but open our eyes to it. If we do not, it will be in our power to keep it out. I sat, in my boyhood, at the feet of a wise old teacher,

who said that "A people is like a man; and, if a man set himself to believe a lie, God punishes him with complete success." I look upon the future of Massachusetts and of the country without fear. The new days and the new century are to be better than the old. This beginning of another age, this headland that our Ship of State is passing, on its stormy voyage, freighted with the destiny of liberty and humanity, is a Cape of Good Hope. Our fathers did not penetrate a position their sons cannot hold. The people that gained the great heights of the great Declaration will not abandon them. Humanity that has risen from out the beast shall not "go back into the beast again."





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